



Testimony
before the
House Tourism-Outdoor Recreation
&
Natural Resources Committee

In support of
House Bills
5017 – 5018
5088-5089

Steven J. Yencich, CAE
President/CEO

Good Morning Mr. Chairman, members of the committee. My name is Steve Yencich and I'm President/CEO of the Michigan Lodging & Tourism Association.

I'm here to testify in support of the Pure Michigan Funding Package, (HB 5017/HB 5018 & HB 5088/HB 5089).

These bills are critically important to the short and long-term future of our state's economy. As you reflect on the available options, where can you turn to stabilize, stimulate and grow Michigan's economy?

For the foreseeable future, our manufacturing base will be unable to respond. The seeds are already in the ground for this year's crops, so this state's second largest industry is in no position to provide an economic boost. It will take years for the 21st Jobs Fund to entice new industries to plant and grow jobs here.

Fortunately, Michigan's tourism industry, which provides over 200,000 jobs and generates in excess of \$16 billion in economic activity, is perfectly positioned to jumpstart this state's economy. It's a tourism fact, if you

promote tourism in April, May and June, those tourists will come in July, August and the months that follow.

And with those travelers and tourists comes all kinds of jobs. There are hotel management, line staff and maintenance jobs. There are jobs for campground operators, golf course groundskeepers and Pro Shop employees, employment for restaurant and tavern operators, festival and museum operators, ski resort and outfitter and resort jobs. These jobs are in downstate metropolitan areas, in resorts areas, and all the rural areas in between.

And importantly, there are jobs available for people regardless of age and employment status.

Entry Level Jobs – Whether it's in a fudge shop, golf course or restaurant, our industry offers a variety of entry level jobs for high school and college students where they can acquire a skill set (showing up on time, customer service, etc.) that will serve them a lifetime.

Jobs with Opportunity for Advancement – Tourism is one of the few remaining industries where someone with only a high school diploma can aspire to do great things. Hard work and talent paid off for three past Chairmen of MLTA. One owns his own property, a second manages a major hotel in this area, and the third manages three hotels in northern Michigan. Tourism rewards people with strong work ethic, a fact particularly important to residents who have been recently laid off and are looking for a career change.

Jobs Requiring Degrees – There are over 30 different Michigan colleges and universities that offer 2 and 4 year degree programs in lodging, tourism, and hospitality management. Tourism supplies jobs and careers for college graduates. One of Michigan's soon-to-graduate college students requested that her comments be included with my testimony. Here's what Whitney Schmidt has to say:

I'm entering my final year of study as I pursue my four year degree in Hotel Management at Grand Valley State University. My experiences through the hospitality industry have been considerable. I worked as a server in multiple restaurants since I was 16, and obtained various

jobs at hotels; such as a parking cashier, housekeeping attendant, and front desk agent.

My experience has helped me to acquire job skills that will serve me for the rest of my life. Due to being so busy, I have found myself many times juggling two or three things at the same time; this has definitely taught me how to time manage and prioritize. The hospitality industry also has definitely shown me a lot about guest service and meeting the expectations of ANY and ALL customers. In addition, I have learned to understand exactly how important it is to network and build business professional relationships.

There are over 30 different colleges and universities in Michigan offering two and four year degree programs in hotel, hospitality, outdoor recreations and tourism management. With continued promotion many of my fellow graduates will be able to find jobs and grow families in this state. I feel the hospitality industry is a great field to follow, and would recommend it to anyone interested.

Whitney Schmidt
Grand Valley State University
schmidwh@student.gvsu.edu
616.889.2285

Jobs in and beyond our Industry – Food and beverage, interior design, linen companies, retail, agricultural, website development, human resource support, legal, accounting, architectural design, advertising, marketing, telecommunications, all of these are examples of the many industries that supply the goods and services tourism businesses need to serve the traveling public. Best of all, the hotels, campgrounds, museums, and ski resorts and the jobs they provide can never be outsourced or sent to another state.

So as you consider how best to position Michigan for economic recovery, please think about “Pure Michigan” and this state’s third largest industry. As you can see, Michigan tourism can be the spark that helps to ignite this state’s recovery.

For these reasons, we are requesting this committee’s bipartisan support for the Pure Michigan Funding Package. There’s never been a more important time to grow this state’s economy...

Thank you very much for your time and attention. I would be happy to answer any questions you might have.